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P 160920Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6129
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 5105

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000202

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO; PARIS FOR WALLER;
LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: NEW LEBANESE EMBASSY PERCHED ABOVE OUR COMPOUND

¶1. (SBU) The March 15 placement of a sign embossed with a cedar tree and Arabic lettering denoting the "Embassy of the Republic of Lebanon" paved the way for the official opening of Lebanon's "temporary" embassy on Monday, March 16. RSO locally employed staff (LES) learned the Lebanese Chargé d'Affaires will be participating in a brief press event at a noon outside the Lebanese Embassy's temporary chancery. This office space, formerly held by the Lebanon/Syria liaison office, is housed in a building that essentially sits on our compound, directly above our GSO offices on Ata al-Ayoubi Street. We understand a permanent embassy will be built in the neighborhood but have no information on a specific location.

¶2. (SBU) According to local security contacts, pending security enhancements to the temporary embassy include permanent installation of a Police booth (currently, there is a working-hours police post established at our request) and possible construction of an entrance gate to the building's street entrance. Both features will serve to enhance the security of our own compound. Though it is too early to say whether those enhancements will offset the addition of a new potential yet separate target to our cramped and inadequate facility. Syria's Political Security service is reportedly providing a temporary protective detail to the Lebanese Chargé. Needless to say, we look forward to welcoming the Lebanese diplomatic corps to the neighborhood.
CONNELLY